

## Benefits of Bodhicitta

Shantideva in his 'Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life' describes the following benefits of Bodhicitta:

1. Previously accumulated negative karma will get purified
2. One will take rebirth in the higher realms
3. One will be called 'Child of the Conquerors'
4. One will become the object of worship of celestial beings
5. Eventually one will attain full enlightenment

## Shantideva's 'Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life':

*The moment an Awakening Mind arises  
In those fettered and weak in the jail of cyclic existence,  
They will be named a 'Child of the Conquerors',  
And will be revered by both human and celestial beings in the world.*

*It is like the supreme gold-making elixir,  
For it transforms the unclean body we have taken  
Into the priceless jewel of a Buddha-form.  
Therefore firmly seize this Awakening Mind.*

Further, the following benefits are cited in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lam Rim Chenmo* or 'Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment':

1. Bodhicitta is the only entryway to the Mahayana path
2. One will be called 'Child of the Conquerors'
3. One will outshine Hearers and Solitary Realizers from the point of view of lineage and disposition
4. One will become an excellent field of offering
5. One will easily accumulate great merit
6. Non-virtues and obstructions will be easily purified
7. One's temporary and ultimate purposes will be accomplished effortlessly
8. One will not be affected by harm or obstacles
9. One will quickly develop the stages and paths of insight
10. One will become a source of all well-being and happiness

### Practice Instructions

Tibetan: གཏམ་སྒྲུབ་ - *Dam Ngag* (*Dam* = instruct/explain/teach/counsel, *Ngag* = speech/talk)

As explained before, Bodhicitta aspires to attain enlightenment and therefore, after having explained Bodhicitta, the question that arises is *how* to attain enlightenment. The only way to attain enlightenment is to engage in extensive and prolonged practice of the Mahayana stages to full enlightenment which in turn must be preceded by listening, contemplating and meditating on Mahayana practice instructions.

Therefore, the reason for Maitreya's 'Ornament for Clear Realizations' explaining ten different Mahayana practice instructions after Bodhicitta is that those instructions assist Bodhisattvas on the path of accumulation (or those aspiring to become Bodhisattvas) to generate the qualities they have not generated yet and to not lose the qualities they have generated.

**There are five subtopics that explain Mahayana practice instructions:**

1. The practitioners who listen to Mahayana practice instructions
2. The cause for listening to Mahayana practice instructions
3. The person who gives Mahayana practice instructions
4. The nature of Mahayana practice instructions
5. The division of Mahayana practice instructions
6. The demarcation of (of those listening to) Mahayana practice instructions

**1. The practitioners who listen to Mahayana practice instructions**

The practitioners who listen to Mahayana practice instructions are those who have not entered a path yet as well as Hearers and Bodhisattvas. More specifically, they are those who attained the great level of the Mahayana path of accumulation, because Bodhisattvas who have reached this level cultivate a special meditative stabilization called *concentration of continuous Dharma* which enables them to directly perceive Buddhas in distant places and receive Mahayana practice instructions from them.

Maitreya says in his 'Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras':

*By way of manifestly accomplishing clairvoyance,  
As a result of acquiring meditative concentration,  
(Practitioners) travel to (various) worlds  
In order make offerings and listen to  
Innumerable Buddhas.*

However, in order to be able to listen directly to Mahayana practice instructions from a Buddha one does not have to reach the great level of the Mahayana path of accumulation because even Bodhisattvas on the small and middling path of accumulation as well as practitioners who have not entered a path yet are able to receive Mahayana practice instructions from, for instance, a supreme emanation body of a Buddha. A supreme emanation body of a Buddha is an emanation of a Buddha who engages in the twelve enlightened deeds (see Handout 11), like Shakyamuni Buddha.

The only sentient beings on the Mahayana path who do not listen to Mahayana practice instructions are tenth ground Bodhisattvas who abide in the *uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum*. The *uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum* refers to the meditative absorption realizing emptiness directly and permanently eliminating the *subtlest* obstructions to omniscience. The moment Bodhisattvas have eliminated those they become Buddhas. Therefore this meditative absorption is called *uninterrupted path* because it uninterruptedly eliminates the cognitive obstructions (obstructions to omniscience).

It is called *uninterrupted path at the end of the continuum* because it is the last awareness Bodhisattvas generate before they become Buddhas, i.e. it is an awareness at the end of the continuum as a sentient being.

Bodhisattvas who have generated that meditative absorption do not listen to Mahayana practice instructions anymore because they do not have to rely on teachings and instructions in order to become enlightened.

Dharmamitra says in his 'Clear Word':

*On the uninterrupted path those (practice instructions) are not pursued because one is able to generate the self-originated exalted wisdom.*

## 2. The cause for listening to Mahayana practice instructions

The cause for listening to Mahayana practice instructions is the *concentration of continuous Dharma*

Maitreya says in his 'Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras':

*At that time (the practitioner) through the 'Continuous Dharma'  
Acquires extensive practice instructions  
From the Buddhas in order to obtain  
Vast calm-abiding and primordial wisdom.*

### Concentration of continuous Dharma:

Tibetan: ཇོས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་ཏིང་ངེ་འཛིན། - Choe Gyun gyi Ting nge dzin (Choe = Dharma, Gyun = continuation /

continuum, gyi = genitive, Ting nge dzin = concentration)

The nature of the *concentration of continuous Dharma* is:

A union of calm abiding and special insight which yields the special potential in those who abide on the lower paths to directly see Buddhas and -- having eliminated most of the coarse obstructions to listening to the Dharma -- to listen to practice instructions from supreme emanation bodies.

## 3. The person who gives Mahayana practice instructions

The person who gives Mahayana practice instructions is either a spiritual teacher who has not entered a path yet or a Mahayanist on any of the five Mahayana paths.

## 4. The nature of Mahayana practice instructions

The definition of the Mahayana practice instructions is: Mahayana speech that teaches the method for attaining the goal of the generated Mahayana mind.

### The different aspects of the definition:

1. Mahayana practice instructions teach the method for attaining the goal of the generated Mahayana mind: the generated Mahayana mind is Bodhicitta and the goal of Bodhicitta is full enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Therefore practice instructions teach the method for attaining enlightenment or Buddhahood.
2. Mahayana practice instructions are Mahayana speech: they are words pertaining to the Mahayana and are either spoken by a Buddha or a sentient being.

Words spoken by a Buddha are called 'enlightened speech' and can be categorized into three:

### The category of enlightened speech:

1. Enlightened speech coming from a Buddha's mouth
2. Authorized enlightened speech
3. Enlightened speech inspired by a Buddha

**Examples for the categories of enlightened speech based on the 'Heart Sutra':**

1. Enlightened speech coming from a Buddha's mouth:

The 'Heart Sutra':

*Excellent! Excellent! O noble child, it is just so; it should be just so. One must practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have revealed. For even the Tathagathas will rejoice.*

2. Authorized Enlightened Speech:

The Heart Sutra:

*Thus have I once heard. The Blessed one was staying in Rajgriha at Vulture Peak along with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattva {...} the venerable Shariputra spoke to the noble Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva, the great being, and said.*

3. Enlightened speech inspired by a Buddha: the dialogue between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara.

**5. The division of Mahayana practice instructions**

a) Instructed Mahayana practice instructions

b) Subsequently taught Mahayana practice instructions

**a) Instructed Mahayana practice instructions**

The definition of *instructed Mahayana practice instructions* is: Mahayana speech that serves the purpose of preserving qualities already obtained

**b) Subsequently taught Mahayana practice instructions**

The definition of *subsequently taught Mahayana practice instructions* is: Mahayana speech that serves the purpose of obtaining qualities not yet obtained.

Those two types of Mahayana practice instructions are equivalent because all the Mahayana practice instructions are both, *instructed Mahayana practice instructions* and *subsequently taught Mahayana practice instructions*.

**6. The demarcation of (those listening to) Mahayana practice instructions**

Regarding the demarcation of those listening to Mahayana practice instructions; practitioners who have not entered a path yet as well as Mahayanists on any of the five paths listen to Mahayana practice instructions. Please note that even Buddhas listen to Mahayana practice instruction though only for the benefit of sentient beings.

**Ten Mahayana practice instructions:**

As mentioned above according to Maitreya's 'Ornament for Clear Realizations' there are ten Mahayana practice instructions which expound ten different topics:

1. The two truths
2. The four noble truths
3. Going for refuge
4. Diligence/enthusiastic effort/perseverance of non-involvement
5. Diligence/enthusiastic effort/perseverance of tirelessness
6. Diligence/enthusiastic effort/perseverance of thoroughly applying oneself to the path of practice
7. Five visions
8. Six clairvoyances
9. Path of seeing
10. Path of meditation

